

REMARKS

Claims 1-4, 8-10, 12, 13, 15, and 16 remain in this application, and claims 5-7, 11, and 14 are canceled. Reconsideration of the application is requested.

New Figure 4 shows "further supporting elements" as specified in claims 8-10, and the objection set forth in section 1 on page 2 of the Office Action should be withdrawn.

The claim amendments set forth above are made after consideration of the comments provided in section 2 on pages 2-3 of the Office Action, and claim 2 is now in proper form.

Claims 5-7 are canceled, and the objection set forth in section 3 on page 3 of the Office Action is moot.

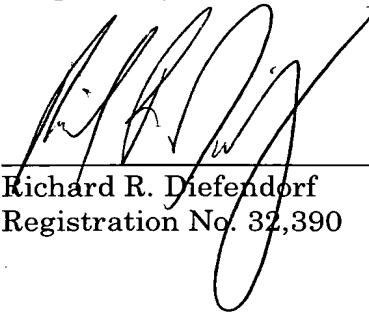
The indication that certain claims contain allowable subject matter provided in section 6 on page 3 of the Office Action is acknowledged with appreciation. For reasons discussed below, however, it is respectfully submitted that all of the claims remaining in this application are allowable in their present forms.

Independent claim 1 is amended above for clarity. Claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102, along with dependent claims 5 and 8, as anticipated by U.S. Patent 6,325,431 B1 to Ito. Reconsideration is requested. As discussed in lines 45-59 in column 8 of the Ito patent, the Ito reinforced portion 32, identified as a "rigid supporting element" by the Examiner, is actually made up of five

equally spaced concave portions provided on upper and lower sides of a bumper beam 21. These concave portions do not constitute a "rigid supporting element ... in the cross member" as claim 1 recites. Although a reinforcing member 40 is shown in Figure 10 of the Ito patent, moreover, that reinforcing member 40 is placed so as to be in axial alignment with a mounting member 26 and not in a longitudinal center plane of a vehicle as claim 1 defines. Claim 1 is not anticipated by the Ito patent disclosure, therefore, and it is respectfully submitted that claim 1 is patentable in its present form. Dependent claims 5 and 8 are patentable as well. All claims remaining in this application, therefore, are now patentable.

This application is now in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any questions after considering this Reply, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,



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DRAWING AMENDMENTS

Please amend the drawings by adding new Figure 4 appearing on the sheet appended to this Reply.